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OUR WAR WITH GERMANY

XVII

(July 6—August 5)

THE sixteenth month of our war with Germany passes into the record as our first sustained period of battle, and closes with the announcement not only of conspicuous successes by our men in action, but also of the purpose of our Government to redouble our efforts in the war by extending the draft ages so as to include men from 18 years of age to 45, and to use them in the field, or in labor, or in military training, as the occasion requires.

These are the most momentous announcements concerning American participation in the war since that participation began. The expression of intention to redouble our efforts came from Mr. Baker, Secretary of War, at a time when for days the reports from the battle front had been recording the success of the American troops taking their full share in the fighting. "It is, of course, a cause for congratulation and rejoicing," he said, "but would by no means justify any relaxation of our efforts. It means that we must redouble our efforts." The announcement of intention to draft men from 18 to 45 came also from Mr. Baker. For some time he has had under advisement and preparation a measure which has come to be spoken of as the Administration Man-power bill. On August 3 the draft of this bill was submitted by Mr. Baker to Senator Chamberlain and Representative Dent, the chairmen of the Military Committees of the Senate and House. It is understood that the measure has the support of the President, and at this writing it is expected to become law within a short time. The ages subject to draft which it provides are those of the first army organization bill passed by the American Congress, the famous act of May 8, 1792, which made the first declaration of the obligation of manhood military service by citizens of the United States. From that time until the enactment of the Selective Draft law last year, those ages have marked the period of liability to military service in this country. The restriction of the draft to the narrow limits of men between 21 and 31 has proved insufficient to provide the numbers of American troops needed in France. The new draft ages will meet all requirements, even under the unlimited organization suggested by the President in a recent speech.

The announcement of such a purpose on the part of the Administration came as a fitting climax to the news of the fighting which had been going on, with slightly fluctuating, but unceasing, activity for nearly all the month. American fighting with the Germans began some time ago, in minor contacts, and in June had reached the stage that

was described as battle in wars previous to this one. Still, no great number of American troops had been engaged at one time or place. But in the fighting of this month, American participation has developed to a point which may be called "battle," even in this war of unmeasured battles. Steadily, and without interruption or untoward event, our troops have given proofs of their quality which can only swell the hearts of Americans with pride and with new determination to carry on the war at all costs and sacrifices to a victorious conclusion. Still, although our participation has not reached such degree in numbers as has been customary with the French and British from the early days of the war, we have had twice as many men in action as any general commanded in battle in the Civil War, and thousands more than fought on both sides together in any battle of that great war. Washington has been chary of exact figures, but it was reported that some 270,000 American troops were in the fighting, and it was announced that seven divisions and one regiment were taking their share in the work.

The fifteenth month of our war closed with the definite repulse of the great Austrian offensive on the Italian front. By July 6 the Italians had thrust the enemy back across the Piave at all points where he had crossed, and completely held the western bank of the river. Rome announced the capture of 34,434 prisoners, with 63 guns and immense quantities of war material. It was estimated that the abortive effort had cost the Austrians between 200,000 and 250,000 casualties. At the same time, correspondents with the American and French armies began to report indications of a new German drive, one of which was that the concentration of reserves behind the lines seemed to have been completed. There was much evidence of unsatisfactory condition among the German troops, which the German High Command believed an offensive would improve. Divisions were reduced below normal by long unrelieved service in the trenches, and the morale of the men was affected. For a week or ten days the daily despatches discussed the delayed opening of the expected offensive. And then, on July 15, it came, and the first day produced a glorious victory for American arms.

On a front of fifty-six and a half miles, east and west of Rheims, the Germans advanced, using about thirty-five divisions. East of Rheims they met French and American troops, and there they were heavily repulsed, although making some small gains. West of Rheims they scored more initial successes. To the east of Chateau-Thierry, and between it and Dormans they succeeded in crossing the Marne at six points. One division came over in front of an American division, and by 10 o'clock in the morning had 15,000 men across. Then the Americans counter-attacked, and at nightfall the only Germans south of the Marne in that part of the field were dead or prisoners.

General Foch had been prepared for the attack, and it achieved by far the smallest advance of all the German drives of the year, of which it was the fifth. Orders found on captured men showed that the German staff planned on the capture of Epervain the first day, Chalons the second, and Sezanne, 26 miles south of the Marne, the third.

From that day to the one on which this is written, three weeks later, the battle has continued with practically no interruptions and with success almost unvaryingly on the side of the Allies. It has been

marked by days and nights of fierce and savage fighting, often hand to hand, with bayonet and gun butt. There have been some temporary fluctuations of fortune, but the result has been a great victory for the Allies and a severe defeat for Germany. It has removed the menace to Paris, and has wiped out the Marne salient, with the loss of much of the ground gained by the Germans in the great drive which began on May 27, with the capture of the Chemin des Dames position. This drive, broken within a few hours of its commencement, never recovered its vigor. The resolute resistance of the Allied troops prevented the best German divisions from getting beyond our first zone of defense, and the brilliant American counter-stroke, which threw the Germans back across the river at the pivotal point, completely upset their plans on the first day. The drive had exhausted itself and was definitely stopped all along the line by July 18.

Then General Foch delivered his counter blow. He struck on a 28-mile front, from the Aisne to the Marne, along the west side of the German salient. All along the line that day the Allied soldiers were successful, capturing some thousands of prisoners and many guns. The Americans alone took 4,000 prisoners and thirty guns. One result of the day's work was to bring the German railroad lines of communication within the salient under the Allied artillery, and thereby to render the situation extremely serious for them. The next day the Allied drive continued, and brought the toll of prisoners up to 17,000, with 360 guns. The ground gained in the two days was more than six miles. Captured German officers revealed the fact that they had been completely surprised by the offensive, because they did not believe that Foch had any reserves. They thought he was exhausted. On the third day the Allies reoccupied Chateau-Thierry, and north of that city gained about four miles. The Germans were now back across the Marne, and were being pushed slowly northward out of the salient. Steadily, day by day, the fierce fighting continued. The Germans made desperate efforts to save as much as they could of their forces and supplies. The ground they surrendered was found to contain vast stores of war material which they had been unable to remove or destroy. The huge quantities of material of this sort were constant surprises to the Allied men, thrusting their way steadily forward. Fresh German reserves were constantly thrown into the fighting, until 77 divisions had been identified.

On July 27 the retreat had reached the line of the Ourcq, and there a new chapter in American military history was written about the village of Sergy. The Germans had orders to hold the north bank of the river. The Americans pushed across to drive them out. Back and forth through Sergy the battle raged. Time after time the little ruined village changed hands. The Germans sent the famous 4th division of Prussian Guards to hold it. They met an American division that would not be denied, and in the end our men won.

On July 31 there was a lull in the fighting, but next day the men were back at it with renewed vigor, and the pushing back of the Germans was resumed. British troops were now with the French on the west side of the salient, between Soissons and Fere. Two miles were gained at one point that day, and the prisoners now totalled 33,400 for the two weeks of battle. On August 2 the Germans fell back more

precipitately, and the Americans gained about five miles. That day the French entered Soissons and Fere, and it was evident that the German retreat would take them at least to the line of the Vesle. As this is written, the report comes that the Americans are in Fismes, at the centre of the line between Soissons and Rheims, and it may be that the Germans are going back to the line of the Aisne.

Our troops have borne their full share in some very gallant work, and the Germans have suffered a severe check. Its moral effect may well be much greater than its military result would indicate. It has been of incalculable value to the Allies, and has left the American troops with the settled conviction that they are the masters of the best soldiers the Germans can produce.

While this fighting has been going on, the American preparations for more fighting have continued with increasing rapidity and volume. At the end of the first week in July, General March, the Chief of Staff, said: "We have embarked a million men and are now going after the second million." Later in the month General March announced the organization of three army corps in France, each corps numbering from 225,000 to 250,000 men. This indicated the presence of about 700,000 American troops on the lines in France. On July 20 General March announced that more than 1,200,000 men had been embarked for Europe, and at about the same time word came from London to the effect that the British expected 300,000 Americans to go overseas in July. On July 31 the War Department announced the unification of all branches of the military service, abolishing the distinction between the regulars, the National Guard, and the National Army. Hereafter there is to be only one United States Army. At the same time there were reports that volunteering would be stopped entirely, and all men for military and naval service raised by draft. This would be a long step in the direction of universal military service.

With such vast transportation of American troops to Europe being carried on it was natural that the U-boats should be exerting themselves to do their worst, and in certain respects they had an unusual measure of success. They got several transports, one of them the *Justicia*, of the White Star line, the third largest ship in service. She was sunk on July 20, off the Irish coast, on a return voyage to this country. Of her crew of 575 men, eleven were lost. Nine torpedoes were fired at the ship, in a running fight that lasted about twenty hours. Either she was attacked by a number of different submarines acting together, or she was singularly unfortunate in being sighted by several different ones at intervals. Men of her crew report that four of the torpedoes fired at her were exploded before they reached her by gunfire from her decks.

About 11 o'clock on the morning of July 19, when the weather was clear and fine and the sea smooth, the United States armored cruiser *San Diego*, formerly the *California*, of 13,680 tons, was blown up and sunk ten miles south of Fire Island and only fifty miles from the entrance to New York harbor. She had nearly twelve hundred men aboard. The explosion occurred abaft the beam, which led some of her complement to think it was caused by a torpedo rather than a mine, and Captain Christy held that view. But Secretary Daniels expressed the opinion that it was caused by a mine. Six men were killed

and 1,183 rescued. No periscope was seen, nor was the wake of a torpedo observed. The next day a German submarine came within three miles of Orleans, on Cape Cod, and attacked a tug that was towing four empty barges. The shells set fire to the tug and sank the barges. Some of the barge crews were wounded, but no lives were lost. The occurrence was witnessed by hundreds of persons on the beach.

The British transport *Barunga* and the American transport *West-over* were also sunk by submarines this month, and the Cunard liner *Carpathia*, in the transport service, was sunk off the Irish coast the day before the *Justicia* was lost. No serious loss of life occurred in any of these cases. The Germans did not get many vessels during the month, but were unusually successful in sinking large ones. On July 30 Sir Eric Geddes, first lord of the British Admiralty, told the House of Commons that submarine losses were decreasing and new construction increasing. He said that the gain is already at the rate of 100,000 tons a month, and predicted that this will increase. About the same time Admiral von Holtzendorff, the German chief of Admiralty Staff, explained to the *Cologne Gazette* that the reason the submarines did not stop American troop-ships is that there are so many ports of debarkation between the North of Scotland and the South of France, and that the transports come irregularly and are strongly guarded. Very soon after that confession—made at the very time that the Kaiser was proclaiming to the German people the success of the U-boats, while von Capelle, Minister of Marine, was telling the Reichstag that five big vessels were reported sunk daily and that the total destroyed was 18,000,000 tons—von Holtzendorff was retired.

While Congress waited to receive the Administration man-power bill and for the Ways and Means Committee of the House to complete preparation of the new tax bill, the House received, on July 22, a statement from Representative Sherley, chairman of the Appropriations Committee, covering expenditures and appropriations for the first and second years of the war. Mr. Sherley figured with a liberality that practically disregarded the tremendous difference between appropriations and expenditures, and estimated the war bill for the two years at about fifty billion dollars. In the first year the total of appropriations was \$25,892,027,501, of which \$7,000,000,000 was for loans to the Allies. Of this \$5,623,029,750 was issued, and the other expenditures were \$5,310,325,030 less than the appropriations. That is, the total expenditures, including loans to the Allies, was \$19,204,732,221. The total of appropriations for the next fiscal year, thus far, is \$24,328,561,425, with \$3,000,000,000 more for loans to the Allies. Also there are contract authorizations aggregating \$5,462,680,346, for which appropriations must be made during the next year, without figuring on deficiency bills which may be passed at the winter session. The treasury, estimating the year's expenditures at about twenty-four billions, asked for a tax law which would raise eight billions this year. Many suggestions have been made to the Ways and Means Committee, but the plan most favored is for a war profits levy ranging from 30 per cent to 80 per cent, with a specific exemption of \$2,000 plus 10 per cent on invested capital. On July 31 Secretary McAdoo announced that the Fourth Liberty Loan campaign would open on Saturday,

September 28th, and continue three weeks. Amount of loan, rate of interest, period, and other features were left for future announcement.

Congress having passed a special resolution conferring the authority on him, the President issued a proclamation on July 23 taking over control of all telegraph and telephone systems from midnight of July 31, and appointing Postmaster-General Burleson to administer them.

At the close of the month, another announcement of great import came from the Government. It was made by Frank L. Polk, Counsellor of the State Department, and was to the effect that the United States and Japan have agreed to send "a few thousand men" to Vladivostok to safeguard the country in the rear of the Czecho-Slovak army operating westward in Siberia. The United States will continue to co-operate with the British and French in Murmansk. Formal assurance will be given to the Russian people by the United States and Japanese Governments that they do not intend to interfere with Russian sovereignty or territorial integrity, and that their only object is to aid the Russian people to regain control of their own affairs, their own territory, and their own destiny. The United States will send to Siberia a commission of merchants, agricultural experts, labor advisers, Red Cross and Y. M. C. A. representatives to spread useful information, render educational help, and relieve the economic necessities of the people as opportunity offers. This announcement followed a month of puzzling cross-statements regarding the Russian situation and the intentions of the American Government. The Czecho-Slovak forces in Siberia continued to operate successfully, and on July 26 captured Simbirsk, on the Volga, one of the important bases of the Soviet power. The Soviets Council regards the Czecho-Slovak movement with great apprehension, and on July 16 shot ex-Czar Nicholas Romanoff, on the pretext that there was a conspiracy working to capture Yekaterinburg, where he was held. The announcement added that "the wife and son of Nicholas Romanoff have been sent to a place of security."

On July 6, Count von Mirbach, the German ambassador at Moscow, was assassinated, and on the 20th Field Marshal Count von Eichorn, the German commander in the Ukraine, was murdered in Kiev. On July 15 London despatches reported the occupation of the whole of the Murman coast by American and British troops. It was explained in Washington that the American force was a small detachment of Marines.

Throughout the month, of course, the customary German and Austrian peace feelers continued. The month opened with a prolonged council at German Great Headquarters, attended by the Kaiser, Hindenburg, Ludendorff, Hertling, and at the last by von Kuehlmann, the Foreign Secretary, who had declared in the Reichstag, at the close of June, that peace was not to be achieved by military force alone, but by diplomatic negotiation. Kuehlmann came back from Headquarters and resigned. He was succeeded by Rear Admiral von Hintze, ex-minister to China, one of the most radical Pan-Germans, and a master of German intrigue. It was a triumph for the peace of the "strong German sword" idea. On July 11, two days after Kuehlmann's resignation, Hertling spoke in the Reichstag, and put out another peace feeler. He spoke of the conference at Great Headquarters, where

"exhaustive discussions regarding these questions took place under the Presidency of the Kaiser." In explaining the result of that conference, Hertling said: "We stand for the peace of Brest-Litovsk, and we wish to see this peace carried out in a loyal manner." Regarding Belgium he said: "The present possession of Belgium only means that we have a pawn for future negotiations. We have no intention to keep Belgium in any form whatever. . . . What we want is the inviolability of our territory, open air for the expansion of our people in the economic domain, and naturally, also, security in regard to the future. How this point can be established in detail depends upon future negotiations, and on this point I am unable to give binding declarations." This reference to Belgium as a pawn evoked an official interpretation, "in order to prevent misunderstanding," which said: "By the expression 'pawn' is meant that one does not intend to keep what one has in one's hand as a pawn if negotiations bring a favorable result." Hertling included in his speech a declaration that he would direct the line of foreign policy and that Hintze would merely carry it out.

This bid attracted little attention from the Allies. Two days later Baron Burian, Austrian Foreign Minister, followed it with another feeler, in which he declared that "we regard this war as senseless and purposeless bloodshed which might at any moment be ended by the re-emergence of feelings of humanity in our enemies." The next day came Foch's offensive.

Two casualties in the aviation service during the month evoked national expression of loss. One was the death by accident, through a fall at Gerstner Field, of Major John Purroy Mitchel, former Mayor of New York City. The other was the death in action, over the German lines near Chateau-Thierry, of Lieutenant Quentin Roosevelt, youngest son of the former President.

In a letter to President Wilson dated July 11, Herbert Hoover, the Food Administrator, set forth the fact that shipments of grain to our Allies for the fiscal year 1918 totaled 340,803,000 bushels, or 40,900,000 bushels more than the preceding year. But in the previous year there had been a crop surplus of 200,000,000 bushels, so that, in Mr. Hoover's language, the shipments did not trench on the home loaf. In this year, however, the crop was just about the normal domestic requirements, so that the total wheat shipments represented savings from our own wheat bread. On July 27 Mr. Hoover, from London, released the hotels, restaurants and dining-car services from their pledge to use no wheat until the harvest. The food crisis is over, so far as wheatless days are concerned, and it was beaten this year by the voluntary saving of the American people.

[This record is as of August 5 and is to be continued.]